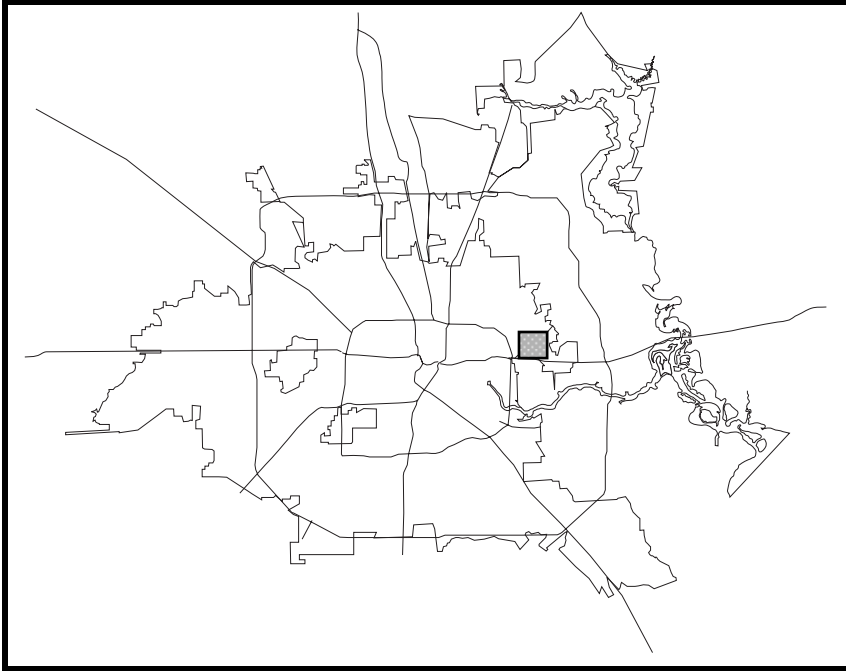


## PC ACTION

### 7. Mercury / Oates



**APPLICANT:** Songwood Civic Association

**KEY MAP:** 496 A

**LAMBERT:** 5658

**JURISDICTION:** City, Harris Co.

**PROPOSAL:** To delete Mercury Drive, a major thoroughfare between IH 10 and proposed Hwy 90 and to delete Oates, a major thoroughfare between Hwy 90 and Wallisville Road.

**APPLICANT JUSTIFICATION:**

(See attached Songwood Civic Association letter)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** DELETION of Mercury Drive from the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan from IH-10 to Highway 90 and RECLASSIFICATION of Oates to a major collector between Hwy 90 and Wallisville Road.

**PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:** DENY the deletion of Mercury Drive from the Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan and GRANT the reclassification of Oates to a major collector between Hwy 90 and Wallisville Road. Major collector width will be 80 feet.

**JUSTIFICATION:** Houston's CIP has scheduled Mercury / Oates to begin construction in FY08. Final design of the project is being completed now. Modification of the original proposal calls for starting construction at Wallisville Road and terminating construction just south of proposed Hwy 90. There will be a gap of unconstructed paving between the portion south of Hwy 90 serving the park's parking facility and the existing Mercury Drive paved lanes in the Songwood Subdivision. The segment of Oates Road between Wallisville and Hwy 90 will be improved to an 80 foot ROW with four lanes of traffic and a continuous left turn lane. This construction is to coincide with TxDOT's construction of Hwy 90.

# PC ACTION

Overall north-south traffic circulation will be improved by the construction of Hwy 90. Additionally, the western leg of Oates will remain and will cross Hwy 90. This crossing, not intended to interchange with Hwy 90, will still provide vital north-south local street circulation between IH-10 and Wallisville Road. When Woodforest, an east-west major collector is completed connecting Gellhorn to Oates Road the overall circulation pattern will be complete.

## FACTORS ASSESSED: History, Platting, and Right-of-way

Mercury Drive has been on the City of Houston's Major Thoroughfare and Freeway Plan (MTFP) since 1957. The corridor is referred to as Oates Road/Mercury Drive. Mercury Drive is currently a dead-end extending for approximately 0.6 of a mile from Interstate Highway 10 (IH-10) to the City of Houston's Herman Brown Park. The southern extension of Oates Road intersecting with IH-10 is not part of the corridor and is actually aligned 0.25 of a mile west of Mercury Drive where it bears north approximately 0.875 of a mile. At that point, Oates Road turns at a forty-five degree angle bearing east for approximately 0.25 before taking another forty-five degree angle back north into the Oates Road/Mercury Drive corridor alignment.

The Mercury Drive section of the corridor is within the city limits and has a street hierarchy classification of "T-4-100". However, this classification only accurately depicts the northern part of Mercury Drive from Filey Court to Herman Brown Park. This segment is a four-lane roadway divided by a raised median. The southern segment from just north of IH-10 to just south of Filey Court has only two undivided lanes and approximately 50 feet of right-of-way and possibly less in selected areas.

Mercury Road was platted in two segments. The first segment was platted in 1956 with the Songwood Addition subdivision from IH-10 north to Lafferty Oaks Drive and the second segment was platted with the Songwood, Section Two subdivision in 1960 as far as Broadstairs Drive and Dunvegan Way. The remainder of Mercury Drive enters Herman Brown Park and terminates into a parking lot.

## PLATTING ACTIVITY

| Subdivision Name               | Action Date       | Land Use                       | KM   | No of Units |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|------|-------------|
| Maxey Road Commercial Sec 1    | February 21, 2002 | SF Residential (public street) | 496C |             |
| Oates Road at I-10 GP          | February 20, 2003 | Multi-family                   | 495H |             |
| Apartments at Oates Road       | February 20, 2003 | Multi-family                   | 495H | 288         |
| Vidhata                        | March 6, 2003     | Commercial                     | 496E |             |
| Apartments at Oates Road Sec 1 | April 17, 2003    | Multi-family                   | 495H | 264         |

The Texas Department of Transportation is finalizing design considerations for the proposed Hwy 90 that will extend from IH 10 / Loop 610 interchange northeastward through to the North Sam Houston Pkwy. They are scheduled to let the project in July 2006. The City of Houston has a CIP project starting in FY2006 and running through FY08 for acquisition, design and construction of Mercury/Oates between I-10 and Wallisville Road. The preferred alternate design calls for the road construction to have a gap just south of the Hwy.90 interchange so that park traffic can enter/exit Hwy. 90 at Mercury, but that through traffic from Hwy. 90 to I-10 would not be allowed.

## City of Houston, Capital Improvement Plan

| Year | Proj No | Street | Description | Amount |
|------|---------|--------|-------------|--------|
|------|---------|--------|-------------|--------|

# PC ACTION

|      |        |               |  |                  |
|------|--------|---------------|--|------------------|
| FY06 | N-0625 | Mercury Drive | Paving I-10 to Wallisville Road Acquisition and Design | 1,058,000        |
| FY08 | N-0625 | Mercury Drive | Paving I-10 to Wallisville Road Construction           | <u>5,000,000</u> |
|      |        |               |  | \$6,058,000      |

*Source:*  
*City of Houston, 2006-2010 Capital Improvement Plan*

The City's CIP plan calls for design and acquisition of property to occur in FY06 and construction to begin in FY08. The entire scope of work includes looks at Mercury and Oates Road from IH 10 to Wallisville Road. The latest Improvements Plan by the Engineer calls for much of the southern half of the project to remain as is. This is the segment that goes through Songwood Subdivision, adjacent to Furr High School and bisects the Hermann Brown Park. Here 100 foot right-of-way exists, but roadway construction exists only two and four lane segments through Furr High School Site and Duncan Street. Further north is Hermann Brown Park where the pavement ends. North of the location of Hwy 90 Oates Road picks up what would be the extension of Mercury. Oates Road provides a current 60 foot ROW with fairly large utility trunk lines for sanitary (48 inch), waterline (16 inch), overhead power and SBD buried cable and four petroleum lines. The CIP recommends that this ROW be expanded to an 80 foot ROW that tapers to 100 feet from Hwy 90 to the 80 foot Oates ROW. This would permit four 12 foot wide lanes with one 14 foot center lane as a continuous left turn lane. This type of lane layout is necessary for the abundant industrial traffic that exists and is projected to increase between Wallisville and Hwy 90. At Hwy 90 an interchange would be provided so that Oates traffic could go east or west on Hwy 90, but not south into Hermann Brown Park or Songwood Subdivision. South of Hwy 90 would provide a round about so that park visitors can arrive at the park via Hwy 90 from either direction and access the Park's parking facility.

## TxDOT, Harris County

| Let Date | CSJ         | Highway | Description   | Estimate                          |
|----------|-------------|---------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Jul06    | 0028-02-054 | US 90   | Construct 6-lane freeway<br>2.2 mi Limits from: 0.62 mi east of Hunting Bayou<br>To 0.590 mi east of Wallisville                              | 50,958,477                        |
| Jul06    | 0028-02-055 | US 90   | Construct 6-lane freeway with grade separation at Mercury<br>0.5 mi Limits from: 0.290 mi west of Mercury<br>To 0.62 mi east of Hunting Bayou | <u>13,197,794</u><br>\$64,156,271 |

*Source:*  
*TxDOT website, March 2006*

## RIGHT-OF-WAY STATUS

The thoroughfares in the area have been improved to meet the standards for thoroughfare development, with the exception of Mercury/Oates. With the City's and TxDOT's CIP projects Oates will soon be improved and the access and cut through concerns of the Songwood Community will be resolved.

| Street  | Segment                             | Classification | Status           |
|---------|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Federal | Maxey Rd. to East Fwy.              | P - 4 - 150    | Sufficient width |
| Federal | East Fwy. to Galena Park City Limit | P - 6 - 120    | Sufficient width |

# PC ACTION

|               |                                 |             |                          |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| Market        | East Loop to Fidelity           | T - 4 - 100 | Sufficient width         |
| Market        | Hunting Bayou to Federal        | T - 4 - 120 | Sufficient width         |
| Oates/Mercury | East Fwy. to Wallisville        | T - 4 - 100 | To be widened / acquired |
| Oates/Mercury | Wallisville to Beaumont Highway | T - 4 - 100 | Sufficient width         |

## SPACING

Thoroughfares in this area do not make for an equally spaced grid system. The spacing between thoroughfares is more distant than the standard due to obstacles such as the proximity of Hunting and Greens Bayous, the intersection of nearby freeways (IH 10, Loop 610 and Hwy 90) and Herman Brown Park. The nearest thoroughfare that parallels the Oates Road/Mercury Drive corridor in a north/south direction is IH 610 which is one mile to the west. However, IH 610 does not offer much local mobility. Other north/south thoroughfares that do offer local mobility are Gellhorn Drive, 1.5 miles to the west, and Maxey Road, two miles to the east. If Mercury Drive were taken off the MTFP, there would be approximately 3.5 miles between these north/south thoroughfares.

The former proposed alignment of John Ralston Road between Woodforest Boulevard and Wallisville Road would have provided a north/south thoroughfare between Maxey Road and the Oates Road/Mercury Drive corridor at a distance averaging approximately one mile between thoroughfares. However, in 1996, the Parks and Recreation Department requested an amendment that this alignment be deleted from the Major Thoroughfare Plan. The department cited negative impacts on a natural preservation area east of Hunting Bayou and a possible conflict with the desires of the Brown Foundation, Inc. who deeded the park to the City in 1979. The Planning and Development Department agreed with the deletion of John Ralston Road contingent on keeping Maxie Road and the Oates Road/Mercury Drive alignment on the Major Thoroughfare Plan to accommodate the redistribution of north/south traffic due to the deletion. Moreover, the Oates Road/Mercury Drive corridor traverses the park at a much narrower point and impact on the park would be substantially less than the John Ralston Road alignment. Access to active recreational areas such as soccer and softball fields in the northwest corner of the park is planned to be provided for from the south via Mercury Drive and from the north via the Mercury/Oates interchange with Hwy. 90. The Parks and Recreation Department's master plans have consistently recognized that the Oates Road/Mercury Drive corridor went through the park where the John Ralston Road alignment was not.

The nearest perpendicular east/west thoroughfare is IH-10 but, again, this freeway offers little local mobility. Market Street is an east/west thoroughfare 0.5 of a mile south of IH-10 and is in Jacinto City where it intersects Mercury Drive. The nearest existing east/west thoroughfare to the north is Wallisville Road and is approximately two miles from the present northern terminus of Mercury Drive. The proposed US Highway 90 (US 90) will take a more northeast/southwest direction and is planned to intersect with the Oates Road/Mercury Drive thoroughfare alignment in Herman Brown Park.

Woodforest Boulevard was also proposed to be an east/west corridor passing through Herman Brown Park. However, a 1999 amendment to the Major Thoroughfare Plan sponsored by the City of Houston deleted a portion of Woodforest Boulevard and truncated the corridor east of the park. Concurrently, the Houston Fire Department successfully amended the thoroughfare plan by adding a section of the same corridor west of the park beginning at Gellhorn Drive and ending at Oates Road.

| Street  | From  | To           | Street Type  | Direction | Spacing |
|---------|-------|--------------|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Liberty | Mesa  | Oates        | Thoroughfare | east-west | 1.39 mi |
| Liberty | Oates | John Ralston | Thoroughfare | east-west | 0.97 mi |

# PC ACTION

|             |              |             |                |             |         |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|---------|
| Liberty     | John Ralston | C E King    | Thoroughfare   | east-west   | 1.09 mi |
| Wallisville | IH 610       | Mesa        | Thoroughfare   | east-west   | 0.55 mi |
| Wallisville | Mesa         | Oates       | Thoroughfare   | east-west   | 0.92 mi |
| Wallisville | Oates        | Maxey       | Thoroughfare   | east-west   | 1.60 mi |
| Wallisville | Maxey        | Normandy    | Thoroughfare   | east-west   | 1.05 mi |
| IH 10       | IH 610       | Mercury     | Interstate Hwy | east-west   | 1.44 mi |
| IH 10       | Mercury      | Maxey       | Interstate Hwy | east-west   | 2.07 mi |
| IH 10       | Maxey        | Normandy    | Interstate Hwy | east-west   | 0.43 mi |
| Mesa        | IH 610       | Wallisville | Thoroughfare   | north-south | 0.80 mi |
| Mercury     | IH 10        | Hwy 90      | Thoroughfare   | north-south | 0.74 mi |
| Oates       | Hwy 90       | Wallisville | Thoroughfare   | north-south | 0.65 mi |
| Maxey       | IH 10        | Wallisville | Principal      | north-south | 2.30 mi |
| Normandy    | IH 10        | Woodforest  | Thoroughfare   | north-south | 1.41 mi |
| Normandy    | Woodforest   | Wallisville | Thoroughfare   | north-south | 0.97 mi |
| Normandy    | Wallis       | Hwy 90      | Thoroughfare   | north-south | 0.79 mi |

## MOBILITY

The land use around Mercury Drive is mainly single-family residential except for Ebbert L. Furr High School on the west side of the right-of-way and the park at the north end of the road. Commercial development exists at the intersection of Mercury Drive and the IH-10 access road. The immediate area around Mercury Drive is largely built out and any more development will probably occur to the west of Oates Road where presently there is mainly horse pasture and vacant land. Future development in this area may be industrial or institutional in nature.

There are no current traffic counts for Mercury Drive. However, Oates Road between Wallisville Road and the Beaumont Highway has a current traffic count of 9,227 vehicles per day (VPD) and a level-of-service (LOS) rating of 'B'. Traffic is expected to increase to 15,519 VPD leading to a LOS rating of "C" providing the Oates Road/Mercury Drive corridor is completed by 2020.

The north/south thoroughfare of Gellhorn Drive has a current traffic count of 5,612 VPD and a LOS of 'A'. According to 2020 projections the traffic count is expected to be 16,645 VPD if Gellhorn Drive is connected to Mesa Drive as planned. This would give the corridor an LOS rating of 'C'.

## LEVEL OF SERVICE

Although level of service for the general area appears that approach delays and decreases in arterial speed will disrupt traffic flow, the inclusion of Hwy 90 should be a great benefit to traffic parallel IH 10.

| Street     | From     | To           | Current VPD | LOS | 2025 VPD | LOS |
|------------|----------|--------------|-------------|-----|----------|-----|
| Federal    | Market   | East Fwy     | 30624       | D   | 34664    | D   |
| Federal    | East Fwy | Flemming     | 21874       | D   | 23041    | D   |
| Maxey      | Flemming | Woodforest   | 19557       | C   | 11234    | B   |
| Mercury    | Market   | East Fwy     |             |     | 12136    | D   |
| Mercury    | East Fwy | Woodforest   |             |     | 13168    | B   |
| Woodforest | Maxey    | John Ralston |             |     | 26484    | E   |
| Market     | Holland  | Federal      | 16446       | C   | 18916    | C   |

# PC ACTION

|             |       |       |       |   |       |   |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|---|-------|---|
| Wallisville | Oates | Maxey | 13971 | B | 19104 | C |
|-------------|-------|-------|-------|---|-------|---|

## SAFETY

An increase in traffic may be a safety issue near Furr High School if Mercury Drive is extended through Herman Brown Park and completes the thoroughfare corridor. Moreover, a Mercury Drive interchange at the future US 90 may facilitate cut through traffic past the school and through the Songwood subdivision. Industrial development along Oates towards Wallisville Road would have a direct route to I-10 through the Herman Brown Park, behind Furr High School parking area and Songwood Subdivision causing cut through concerns.



# *Songwood*

## CIVIC ASSOCIATION

March 4, 2006

City of Houston Planning & Development Dept  
Development Services  
P.O. Box 1562  
Houston, Tx 77251-1562

To Whom It May Concern:

The Songwood Civic Association, representing 662 homes in the Songwood Subdivision, is submitting application to remove Mercury Drive (Project #N-0625) from the Major Thoroughfare Plan effective this year. This same proposal was submitted by The Houston Parks Department in 2003 and public notice was given at that time that the project had been withdrawn. However the current plan still shows the project to be active. It is important to remove this project once and for all and sooner rather than later, as engineering and development research projects are continuing into 2006 at a rate of \$585,000 for the fiscal year.

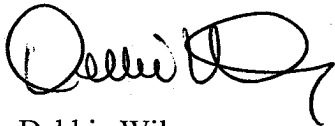
We have worked closely with our Council Member Carol Alvarado over the past 4 years in trying to get this project deleted. We have collected 927 petitions against the project from residents in and around Songwood and students and teachers, including the principal, at Furr High School on Mercury Drive. The petitions are on file in Council Member Alvarado's office. On January 5th the Songwood Civic Association held a meeting addressing this subject. Representatives of TxDOT were in attendance along with Congressman Gene Green, State Representative Harold Dutton, Council Member Alvarado, Joe Turner, Director of the Houston Parks Dept. and a host of other department heads and elected officials were on hand. Over 225 citizens attended. Everyone in attendance expressed grave concerns about this project and its impact on our neighborhood and Herman Brown Park. All officials on hand promised their support in getting the project removed.

As outlined in the 2003 application by the Parks Department and subsequent research by the Planning Commission, there are several reasons why this project should not go forward. Chief among them is the negative impact to the neighborhood of Songwood should Mercury Drive become a 4 lane boulevard extending through Herman Brown

Park. Traffic flow would increase from a current estimate of 500 vehicles per day to 15,519 vehicles per day including trucks, tankers and industrial equipment. In addition this would pose a huge safety hazard in the area of Furr High School in the 500 block of Mercury Drive. While truck traffic is present all over Houston, the East side of town, being heavily industrial, has an inordinate amount of truck traffic on side streets and back roads. Should Mercury Drive become a through street connecting I-10 and Highway 90A and on through to Wallisville Road, which is an extremely heavy industrial area, it would quickly become a popular North/South corridor for cut through industrial traffic. This would devastate the neighborhood of Songwood and the environment of the Park. Park advocacy groups have long opposed this project citing a negative impact to the natural habitat and environment in Herman Brown Park and would go directly against the desires of the Herman Brown Foundation to keep the natural habitat of the park intact.

Attached you will find key points outlining our opposition to this project along with highlights from the research findings by the Planning Commission after the 2003 proposal to eliminate this project. It is our sincere hope that this project can be eliminated entirely once and for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debbie Wilson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Debbie Wilson  
Vice President Songwood Civic Association  
(713) 675-6206



## Key Points

The following six pages, printed directly from the website of the City Capital Improvement Plan, show strong evidence as to why this project should not take place.

- On page 1&2 you will see where a proposal was submitted to withdraw the application for extending Mercury Drive. Page 6 shows a map that was mailed to residents along Mercury Drive in 2003 to advise them that a proposal had been submitted to delete Mercury Drive from the CIP. This map actually shows the area to be deleted with "x's" placed through Mercury Drive. Also on page one 1 you can see that the justification for the proposal to delete Mercury Drive contends that this ***"amendment would satisfy park advocacy groups and area residents opposed to connecting Mercury Drive with Oates Road through Herman Brown Park"***. You can also see where the final action was that the application was withdrawn as requested. We thought the issue was over.
- On page 4, paragraph 2, you will see that in 1996 Planning and Development abandoned the original plan to extend John Ralston Road (1/3 mile east of Mercury Drive) ***"citing negative impacts on a natural preservation area east of Hunting Bayou and a possible conflict with the Brown Foundation who deeded the park to the City in 1979"***. It was then decided that the Mercury Drive extension would be kept on the books, however these same concerns are consistent with any plan to extend Mercury Drive through the park. The park habitat would be jeopardized and in conflict with the wishes of the Brown Foundation. Moreover, John Ralston is on the outer edge of our residential neighborhood and no where near a school and would have little impact on residents. Whereas Mercury Drive cuts directly through the middle of the Songwood subdivision and directly past Furr High School.
- On page 5 the department cites a "safety issue" near Furr High School. ***"An increase in traffic may be a safety issue near Furr High School if Mercury Drive is extended through Herman Brown Park and completes the thoroughfare corridor. Moreover, a Mercury Drive interchange at the future US 90 may facilitate cut through traffic past the school and through the Songwood subdivision."*** It is also worth noting that Furr High School is a "relay point" for drop off children from area schools. School buses and private buses bring children in from several other area schools at 3:30 where they are met by their parents for pick up or bused home or to day care centers from there. The safety concern is also for all of these students, many as young as six years old, in addition to the hundreds of students who attend Furr.
- Also on page 5 you will see that the department states that the ***"land use around Mercury Drive is mainly single-family residential except for E.L. Furr High School on the west side of the right-of-way and the park on the north end of the road."*** ***"The immediate area around Mercury Drive is largely built out and any more development will probably only occur to the west of Oates Road"***. This indicates that there is no room for industrial growth in this deed restricted residential

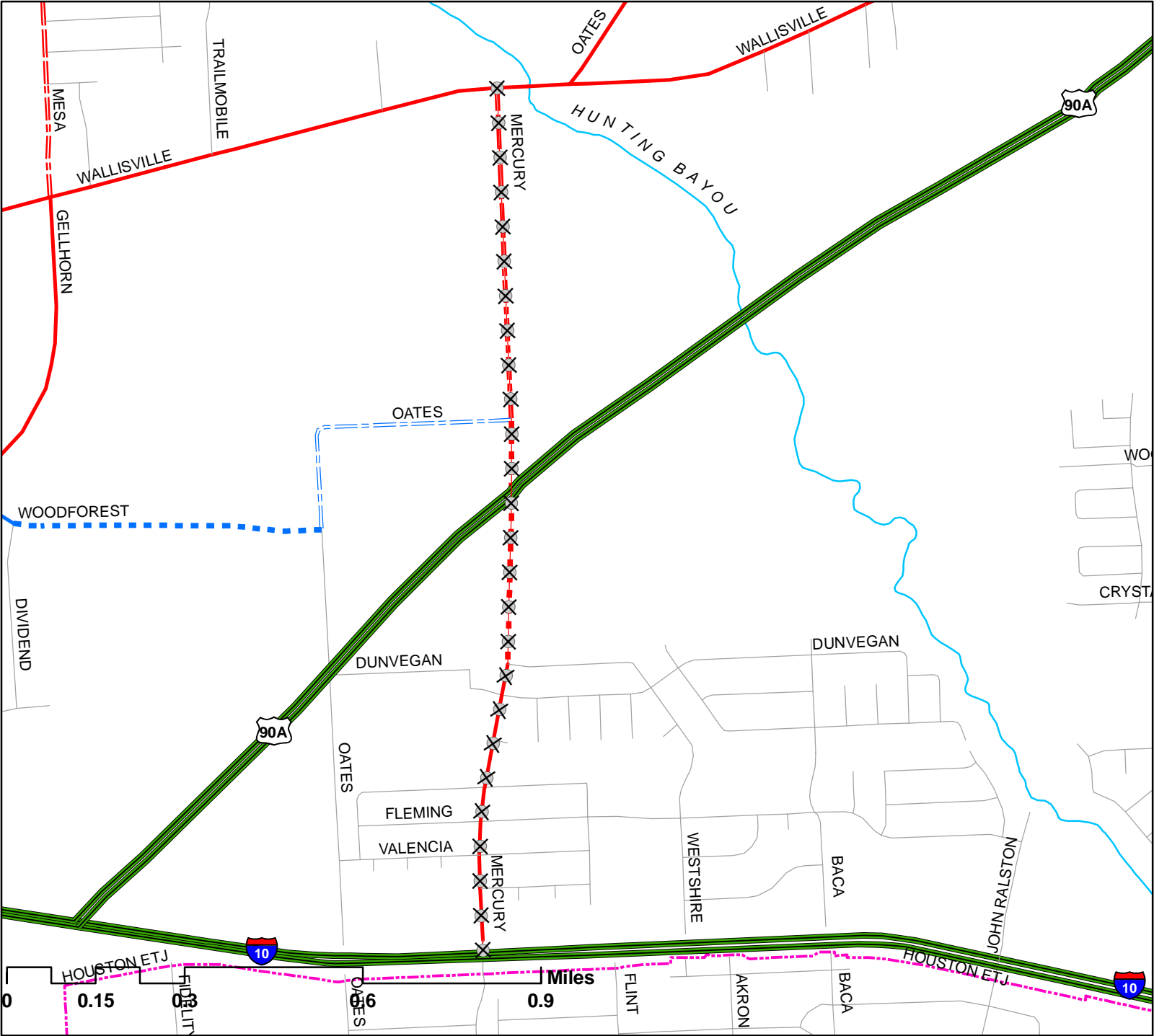
community, nor do we want that, so there would be no economic benefit.

- One of the most eye popping aspect of all is the proposed traffic increase sited on page 5. Currently there are no traffic counts for traffic on Mercury Drive but it is estimated at about 500 cars per day. If Mercury Drive were to become a through street it would be for the purpose of allowing industrial cut through traffic and a traffic volume of **"15, 519 vehicles per day"** is anticipated.
- Over the last 20 years the City has spent millions of dollars building hike and bike trails, soccer fields, baseball fields, pavilions, tennis courts, a fishing pond and picnic areas in Herman Brown Park. All of this would be jeopardized and much of it destroyed to make way for this extension.

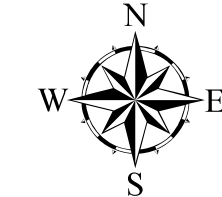
### **The Bottom Line**

**The people do not want this project to happen!!** With 100% opposition to this project it would be directly in conflict with the wishes of the area residents and basic common sense to go forward. We have not found a single logical reason to take a quiet dead end residential street and turn it into a major 4 lane boulevard for industrial including heavy truck traffic. In our efforts to gather letters of protest we found 100% opposition. Not a single person was in favor of this project. No one with thoughts of the safety of the school children, the integrity of the natural habitat of the park or the rich heritage our old deed restricted residential neighborhood could possibly support this project that would certainly destroy all these things.

MERCURY ROAD  
2005 MTFP AMENDMENT



- Legend**
- Proposed Major Thoroughfare
  - Realign Major Thoroughfare
  - Delete Major Thoroughfare
  - Proposed Major Collector
  - Local
  - Proposed Freeway
  - TBW Freeway
  - Sufficient Width Freeway
  - Sufficient Width MTF
  - To be Widened MTF
  - To be acquired MTF
  - Sufficient Width Major Collector
  - TBW Major Collector
  - Proposed Major Collector
  - Proposed Grand Parkway
  - Houston ETJ
  - WATER



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT,  
CITY OF HOUSTON